

The Richlands Town Council held a regular monthly meeting in the Richlands Council Chambers on March 13, 2018 at 7:30pm with the following present:

Mayor:	Jannis White
Town Manager:	Tim Taylor
Town Clerk:	Connie Allen
Council Members:	Mary Ann Strong, Vickie England Rick Wood, Rod Cury, Doug Ratliff, Larry Johnson
Town Attorney:	Brad Ratliff

Mayor White opened the meeting.

Mayor White gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor White - Do we have anyone who would like to speak that is not on the agenda?

Mayor White - Do we have any other additions/deletions to the agenda?

Mayor White – Do we have a motion to approve the agenda as presented? Rod made the motion, Larry seconded the motion.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries- 5/0. (Rick absent for vote)

Mayor White – We have a copy of three (3) sets of minutes-Regular Council Meeting, Joint Public Hearing, and Special Town Council Meeting. Are there any corrections, additions or deletions to the minutes?

Mayor White - Do I have a motion to approve minutes as presented?

Mary Ann - I make a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Vickie seconded the motion.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 6/0.

Mayor White - “Scheduled Public Comments” – Diana Steinbach – Request Street to be named in honor of Grandfather William W. Fields, former Mayor.

Diana Steinbach – I would like to thank all of you for hearing me today. I am the granddaughter in-law of William Wade Fields. He was born in 1890 in Cedar Bluff, VA. He served in the army of WWII. He came home to settle down and start a family in Richlands. He raised six (6) girls and one (1) son. He was a builder. He built many commercial buildings and helped with many community projects. He helped build the Cedar Bluff School, Richlands High School, Nassif building and six (6) of the homes that are on the historical registration on Tazewell Avenue. He was a member of the Richlands United Methodist Church and served on the Board. He opened a modern Five and Dime Cent Store on Front Street and another one in Wise VA. During this time, he ran for Council and then for Mayor. He was a Council member for twelve years. He was a Mayor for twelve years and Chief Justice. Many buildings have his work and his name represented on them, but over the years they have been sold and are no longer a tribute to him. His name is only chiseled on a tombstone in Clinch Valley Cemetery. I believe that WW Fields should be honored on more than a tombstone but remembrance for his service and community commitment to the Town of Richlands. I would like to have something named in his honor in the Town of Richlands. I would suggest possibly a bridge, maybe Dalton Addition Bridge or the Bridge on Front Street, Community Center or Park. I would be content with a plaque or something similar, so when children see, they would then ask who was W.W. Fields. It is sad that a person dies twice in this world, once with his physical being and second when his name is never uttered again. I think W.W. Fields

deserves his second life again. I would also like to say the family of W.W. Fields will be more than happy to take on any financial responsibility for signage or installation that you decide upon. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mayor White - I am not sure what the process is, Mr. Taylor would you like to elaborate?

Tim – The bridges that you mention, there is a problem with that. We have gone thru the process but can't remember all the details. I will have to do some research. Streets are a little harder, but you did mention a lot of different things. It could be a possibility. I would suggest the process be reviewed and then we can see what would be the right thing to do.

Diana - Thank you, I did contact the Virginia Department of Transportation and they said this type of situation is handled by the Town. I don't know what the process is either, but wanted to make the suggestion.

Tim - I will get our attorney to look into the details.

Brad – I will look into it.

Mayor White - Can you give us an update at the next Council Meeting?

Brad - Yes

Mary Ann – I would like to thank you for coming. Your grandfather built many buildings for my father and actually the apartment buildings I own today. He built the first two (2) and maybe several more in Cedar Bluff. My father thought very highly of your grandfather.

Diana - Thank you so much, that means a lot to our family. We are extremely proud of him.

Vickie – I have enjoyed working with you. You have some really great photos of places in our Town.

Mayor White - We will have a report at the next Council Meeting.

Mary Ann - Do we have contact information?

Mayor White, Rod, Vickie - Yes

Mayor White – “Council Member Reports” – Rod Cury

Rod – The next meeting of the Planning Commission is April 3rd at the Town Hall. The citizens that I have been in contact with on issues, have been addressed with the Town Manager.

Mayor White - “Council Member Reports” – Vickie England

Vickie – The last time we met we discussed grants. I talked to Elaine Hardin and she recommend that I talk to Phyllis Roberts at SWCC. She suggested that we go to grants.gov. She didn't know of anything specific for small towns, but she would start looking. April, my daughter, does a lot of grant writing with the Upward Bound Program. They are going to see what is available for us. I was also supposed to have a letter, but don't have it regarding BVU. Ramona has problems with Time Warner and wants us to address why certain parts of the Town can get BVU and why some can't. They have it at the Incubator but don't have it directly across the street. This is a concern that she has about BVU.

Tim - I can address the concerns of accessibility. The Town has worked with BVU the last six months and have problems getting the money for BVU to run the cable.

Doug - The whole problem right now is the take over and the buyout. They won't be able to do much until they get it consolidated. It is just about to go through.

Vickie - Is that BVU?

Tim – It may give us a lot of opportunities, not just for the internet. They are not allowed to do TV Cable and other things. They are only servicing the business community and only have internet fiber. The problem for her now is the location.

Brad - Several places in the surrounding areas BVU laid fiber, but it is not on.

Mayor White – “Council Member Reports” Rick Wood

Rick – Jack Ray is opening the Theater and Ice Cream Shop in Raven. They are expecting to have a grand opening the first of May. Rod, when we were talking about the “Signs” for Richlands you said you would work on writing some grants. We did give money to the Richlands Garden Club, but I thought you said you would work on some grants.

Vickie - It was probably me talking about Tazewell getting some grants.

Rod - I may have misspoken. The Richlands Garden Club came to the Council meeting asking about putting up signs for the Town. Sandy Whitt was here and I suggested possibly using the Rally Grant for it but they offered to pay half of the cost of the proposal. Mary Ann made the proposal to accept their half of the contribution and we would pay the other half; which that is what we did if I remember correctly.

Rick - Yes, that is what we agreed on, but I thought you were going to check on grants.

Rod - I would be glad to help.

Rick - We are going to need more signage for Richlands. Other surrounding Towns have nice signs, for example Tazewell and Bluefield.

Rod - I noticed we have “Hometown of the Clinch” signs up now. We also have the new signs that the Richlands Women Club and Town paid for. The more elaborate signs will engage more money and require some type of grant. I am happy to check on existing grants.

Larry - We need some on the four- lane.

Rick - We really need signage for Richlands.

Mayor White - Signs for the downtown area?

Rick - All the clubs in our community used to have signs at the Richlands Mall. We need to draw people into Town. We need signs on the four-lane.

Rod - I will research and see what I can do.

Rick - I talked to Tim Wallace who is on the Board of Habitat. They want to build houses but they have no property. They will take property that anyone wants to donate, that needs to be cleaned up or whatever they will do in order to build houses.

Tim - A good avenue would be a structure being torn down and the land that possibly would be available.

Rick - They are willing to do whatever they need to do.

Larry - What about the property on Vickie Drive?

Tim - I don't know the status of that property.

Mayor White - There was another piece of property in that area.

Tim - There is a few places in Purcell Addition that needs to be cleaned up.

Rick - The property in Brooklyn underneath the bridge, not sure which street, but it is on the left. If we can get a house there and someone lives in it, it would be a blessing.

Rod - I also talked to him also about the available land for Habitat. It is a good cause and we can thank President Carter for that.

Vickie – I have worked with him on several pieces.

Rick - What about the other problems we have been having?

Vickie - We looked at the cliff at the school and there has been some cleaning.

Tim –We cleaned up the rocks in the ditch and will try to get some of the rock chipped off on Purcell Road. The right of way is large enough to do a safe widening. We put up bigger signs and safety signs. We have made improvements and working on street lighting. Kevin, what is the update?

Kevin – I talked to him approximately three (3) weeks ago, he is coming down to the end of having it all engineered. I should hear something from him soon. I have met with him a couple of times and showed him everything. It looks like it is something easy to do.

Tim - I didn't get specific locations from Mr. Horton, but would be nice to know.

Vickie - The one that he showed me that day, it looked like it had partially burned. It was an eye sore. It was going up to Mr. McGlothlin's church.

Tim - There is one house that has a small farm. The animals are all pinned in and they are legal.

Rod - Is that zoned as an agriculture zone?

Tim - I think it is R2.

Mayor White - What is the status of the Walt Keen property?

Brad – We had communication with his attorney six (6) months ago. They asked for more time to clean up the property, but apparently it has not happened.

Mayor White - It has been approximately ten years. It looks pretty bad.

Brad - I will follow up.

Rick - We keep giving them time, but it is time that we do something.

Brad - It was in litigation with the estate after his death. We were under the assumption that it was going to be taken care of.

Vickie – Who is in charge of the debris on the other side of the fence? Is that the Town or State?

Mayor White - On 6th Street?

Vickie - I walk that street, it really looks bad.

Mayor White – It is the highway’s responsibility.

Tim - We have cleaned it up multi times, but has always been a problem for us. We need to put out a mowing contract which includes cleanup in the next couple of weeks. We could use some inmates for the cleanup, but they don’t come back often enough. It is the States responsibility but we can’t wait on them.

Mayor White – “Council Member Reports” Doug Ratliff

Doug – We face two bigger issues - the Community Planning Partners and the Gas issue. Can we get back on track and get some set dates and start moving on these issues?

Tim - We can call the Community Planning Partners and get that scheduled. It will probably be good timing with the budget work session.

Doug - We need to meet on the Gas, we are getting nowhere on that.

Tim - I will try to schedule some meeting time.

Mayor White - I had some people contact me about the survey on gas in their area, they wanted gas.

Tim - People asked about it, but didn’t receive the survey.

Larry - On May 19 at the Critterville access point, we are going to have a homemade boat race, The Great Richlands River Race. The boats are going to be made of cardboard and duct tape only. It should be very eventful. We have people stepping up sponsoring the activity and getting involved. The first 25 registered participants will receive an event t-shirt provided by a sponsor. We are going to have a DJ and welcome any vendors that want to come to the Rec Park or the Little League with mobile food they have. Registration starts at 9:00 am. There is going to be ten places. If there are any Clubs or High School groups that want to participate, there will be several trophies for different categories.

Larry - Has the brush on side of 67 as you turn down been cut?

Tim - There are (2) two piles there.

Mayor White – “Council Member Reports” – Mary Ann Strong

Mary Ann - I have a lot of positive news. I would like to first welcome a new business in Town, The Rooster’s Nest Barber Shop operated by Daniel Rowlette. His shop is located at Carmella’s. It is a really nice place. He is a Master Barber.

I have several dates that I would like to mention. On March 16 at noon - Recreation Park will be having grand re-opening. There will be guided tours to show the new renovated facility. It will be a really special day and the Mayor will be cutting the ribbon. We would like for people to come and see the new facility. Mr. Phillips is going to have food. Hope everyone can come out and celebrate the new improvements.

There will also be a basketball tournament this weekend.

The Chamber Banquet is on March 22 at 6:30pm at the Community College. The Chamber will be honoring Sue Wade, the Office Manager for Town of Richlands for many years. In support of Sue, Town staff and others should be there to support Sue.

On March 28 at noon the Community Heights Church will be doing their Annual Business Luncheon. It is a free lunch to show appreciation to our Town employees, Fire & Rescue, Police, County employees and all other business that we appreciate them.

The Rec Commission will meet on March 19 at 7:30pm upstairs at the Recreation Department. The only negative thing that I have is the trash. It is not only in the Town limits, but Kents Ridge Road, the four-lane and many other places. It is very embarrassing especially when people out of town come to visit. It really upsets me. The Town is doing all they can. I would like to challenge our citizens to be more responsible and appreciative of the beautiful area that we live in.

Rod - CART is presenting "Beauty and the Beast" this Sunday at 3:00pm at the Middle School.

Mary Ann - People should not say there is nothing to do in Richlands. We have a lot of positive fun activities.

Mayor White - Do any of the Department Heads have anything to share with us? Does anyone have any questions on the various departments?

Tim - Street Department – We did some research trying to get better signage up at the crosswalks. We placed a bigger and more noticeable sign at the Library on Suffolk Avenue. I think it will help some. We will also try to do some painting. If it works, we will try to do this at most of the major intersections.

Mayor White - I want to thank all the businesses that have helped with the Freedom Festival in the past. We will be having the Freedom Festival again this year on the last Saturday in June. Rocky Mollo at Advance Auto has been extremely helpful in the last couple of years. He is always calling asking if there is anything he can do. He volunteers to help along with other businesses. He has made a tremendous store out of Advance Auto.

Mayor White - At one time we all were concerned that it may be leaving Richlands. He has stepped up and done an excellent job. I just wanted to thank him. He is going to help with the car show at the Freedom Festival and other things. If you go by there, thank him for his support and the other businesses that help with the Freedom Festival.

Mayor White - Brad, do you have anything?

Brad - I don't have anything tonight.

Mayor White – "Manager's Report" – Tim Taylor

Mayor White - Glad to see Tim back, he has been out sick. We appreciate you being with us.

Tim - I am glad to be back and appreciate all the prayers and phone calls from the Council and the community.

Tim - You have a copy of the bills to be paid this month. Please take a moment to look at the check register with the bills listed and see if you have any questions.

Rick - Can we purchase a recorder to record the meetings, which would also help Connie?

Tim - We have money in the budget for it but I have not done it yet. It is one of the projects I need to take care of.

Rick - It would really help. We need to go forward.

Mayor White - I have been asked why we don't record the meetings and play it for the ones that miss. Is that possible with the new system?

Tim – We need better and closer cameras. We all need to learn to speak into the mics so we can be heard. I will try to look into it.

Mary Ann - I make a motion to allow Mr. Taylor to pay the bills as presented. Rod seconded the motion.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion?

Doug - I have a question, the power bill was \$835,026.

Tim - That is one of them. We pay directly to EDF Trading. You must add \$166,049 and \$835,026. First bill we have had like this.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 6/0.

Tim - Enclosed is the Monthly Power Cost Report for January 2018 for your benefit. If you have any questions I would be more than glad to answer.

Doug - What was the average bill on cost adjustment?

Tim - Depends on how much you use; 1000 kilowatt hours would be \$6.00.

Doug – Adrienne, what is the average bill? Is it around \$200?

Tim – It is according to the time of year and weather.

Doug - What would be the power cost adjustment on a bill of \$300?

Adrienne - If they go over 1000 kilowatts it would be \$6.00. Power cost adjustment is approximately \$12/\$13.

Mayor White - Do you know how much you collected from power cost adjustment for January?

Adrienne – They have just started paying.

Tim - We don't know yet.

Doug - What is your projection?

Adrienne – I don't know. It is based on the kilowatt hours people use.

Sue - Everybody's electric bill should be down from last month but the cold weather will make the power bills go up again.

Doug - We have approximately 3000 customers, is that correct?

Tim – We may have 2500 customers.

Doug – If you add approximately \$10.00 per person it will be around \$25,000.

Tim - Could be and maybe a little bit more.

Tim - You have already approved the Section House Project bill for \$48,627.22. Twin Enterprises was issued a substantial completion at the last monthly meeting. Substantial completion means it can be used for its intended purpose. They have finished putting the track lighting in and get a final completion. Twin Enterprises has it complete and our architect has signed off on the final bill. I would like to get authorization to pay the final bill of \$20,619.69 which is retainage. This bill is a percentage of the previous bills. Each month we keep a percentage of the money back that they were supposed to be paid in case of future problems.

Rod - I make the motion to pay Twin Enterprises \$20,619.69. Vickie seconded the motion.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion?

Vickie – Who is going to be responsible for the yard work and sidewalks at the Section House?

Tim – The Committee has a sustainability plan for that.

Rod - In reference to the lights, I stopped by yesterday and the last of the lights were being installed around the suspended chimneys that were left exposed by the architect. The lights are very beautiful, they are lifetime lights. One of our new members is associated with the Smithsonian Institute, he researched the chimney, and we will have a lot of architectural history about it.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 6/0.

Tim - We have a contract with Appalachian Power Company for electric service to areas we don't have service in. It has nothing to do with wholesale power. This is a contract that is a tariff rate that has been developed for all public authorities, municipal and governmental entities throughout the entire State of Virginia. When these contracts run out, they have a time limit on them. There are a special group of people from Virginia Municipal Legal and Accounting Organizations with the State that negotiate the contracts with AEP. They have negotiated and we now need to sign the contract to continue serve with them thru 2020. Brad, have you reviewed the contract?

Brad - Yes, there was nothing in the contract that was unusual.

Tim - It enables us to receive the Public Authority tariffs. I need Council to authorize me to execute the contracts.

Rod - I make a motion to authorize Mr. Taylor to authorize the contracts. Mary Ann second the motion.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 6/0.

Tim - We received the renewal quotes for the 2019 Employee Health Insurance Benefits. The rate increase is for all the different tiers within the plan. We have been part of both the Local Choice and private sector group for employee health insurance for several years. The State of Virginia thru the Local Choice program procures for the people that want to participate. We have learned over the years the municipals of this size, not a large group but medium with over 50 that are based in Commonwealth of VA have a hard time getting competitive insurance. We have checked with Tazewell, Bluefield and other areas about their increase and most everyone has the same rates. (Reference the handout) We feel the product is good plan. According to the plan the maximum the employee has to pay is 20% and the employer 80%. We are at 16% for the employees and 84% for the employer. It would be a drastic increase for the employees to pay 20%. We recommend that the employees across the board pay 16% and the employer 84%. We are trying to work this out in our budget process and we will present it to you. Hopefully, there will be money for raises and money to offset these cost. If you agree, it will provide a competitive health insurance for the employees. We will have the budget package to you by April 1st, but we must know by April 1st if we are going to participate. We are comfortable with this and the monies to pay for it.

Mayor – Do you need a motion?

Tim - Yes

Mary Ann - A \$250/\$500 deductible is unheard of. I am happy for the Town employees. Most of the deductibles are four digits right now and increasing.

Doug - I make a motion to allow Tim to accept 16/84 percent. Rick seconded the motion.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 6/0.

Tim - We will have the budget to the Council by April 1st. Our first scheduled work session is April 12th at 7:00 pm. The GDS Associates will tackle our challenges with the Electric Department.

Rod - Is this an open meeting?

Tim - No public comments, just work session for Council but everyone is invited. Hopefully, we can get some dates for other things we need to be looking at.

Mayor White - We had a committee that spent a lot of time on the Walking Trail. Rod, can you enlighten us on the status?

Rod – First I have a correction, the CART Event “Beauty and the Beast” is at the College instead of the Middle School. The Walking Trail vision came from CRVI. The Richlands Planning Commission moves forward with it and we had Council’s approval. We received a CDAC grant. We were given approximately \$18,000 grant and it was a 50/50 match. Part of the match was people attending for the meeting, no out of pocket money. The Planning Commission had a luncheon at the One Stop and we invited all the land owners. We received a lot of positive input and several people stepped forward offering to donate their land or at least give the Town easements for that project. At one time, Tim, various members of the Commission and various land owners went to Blacksburg and met with the Community Design Assistance Center about the Walking Trail. We have a plan that is on the Town’s website which shows the design of the trail. The Town owns a certain amount of land beyond the Critterville Walking Trail, which could actually extend the first phase. Some things require a lot of money and we have not pursued any grants. I did receive an email that there are more CDAC grants available right now. Nick Proctor, a student that works with Community Design, is now at VT and he is offering other grants to do these studies that are as far as it has gone.

Tim - It is identified in our Comprehensive Plan.

Rod - The dream is to have a walking trail all the way from Rec. Park to the Doran Bridge. That would include the access points that Larry has worked so hard to get.

Mayor White - We just need to keep this at the forefront.

Rod - I circulated an email that my sister sent to me to all the Section House Committee. She sent to my niece, Amy Barker and myself, identifying a man from Cincinnati an Oral Historian from the University of Kentucky, part of the Walking Trail involves telling oral history. One more thing we need to incorporate into the Section House.

Mayor White - Where are we on getting all our ordinances?

Brad – I had email conversations with members of American Legal Publishing last week. We are trying to move that process forward; I am using the new code book now.

Mayor White - Do we need to go into “Closed Session”

Brad - Yes, 2.2-3711(a)(7) – Pending Litigation and Council England has asked for 2.2 3711 (a)(10) Special Awards.

Mayor White - We need a motion to go into “Closed Session” for 2.2-3711-(a) (7) – Pending Litigation and 2.23711(a)(10) Special Awards.

Vickie - I make the motion to go into "Closed Session", Rod seconded the motion.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 6/0.

Mayor White - I need a motion to come back into "Open Session".

Rick- I make a motion to come back into "Open Session", Larry seconded the motion.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries - 6/0.

Mayor White - Does everyone agree the only thing discussed during "Closed Session" was 2.2-3711 (a) (7) and 2.2-3711(a)(10)? Mary Ann – Yes, Rod- Yes, Doug-Yes, Rick-Yes, Vickie-Yes, Larry- Yes.

Mayor White - Does anyone else have anything to add? If not, do I hear a motion to adjourn?

Rod- I make a motion to adjourn, Vickie seconded the motion.

Mayor White - We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Motion carries- 6/0.

Adjourned

Jannis White, Mayor

Connie Allen, Town Clerk